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REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated July 8, 2008. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

By the above amendment, claims 1-5 are amended; claims 6-9 are cancelled; and claims 10-11 are newly presented. Thus, claims 1-5 and 10-11 are currently pending in the present application.

Next, the specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised in order to make a number of minor clarifying and other editorial amendments. To facilitate entry of the amendments, a substitute specification and abstract has been prepared. No new matter has been added. Also enclosed is a "marked-up" copy of the original specification and abstract to show the changes that have been incorporated into the substitute specification and abstract. The enclosed copy is entitled "Version with Markings to Show Changes Made."

Next, on pages 2-4 of the Office Action, claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 2002-346855. It is submitted that the present invention, as embodied by the amended claims, now clearly distinguishes over the applied reference for the following reasons.

The present invention, as defined in amended claim 1, is directed to a device for supplying snap rings. The device includes, *inter alia*, an oscillating member that is protractible and retractable with respect to a conveying surface of the conveying path at an area in front of the magazine in the conveying direction, the oscillating member being capable of entering the gap of the snap ring, being pushed out by the extrusion member, and directing the gap forward in the

conveying direction.

An object of the present invention is to provide a snap ring supplying device that is capable of, in a simple structure, reliably directing a gap of a snap ring and stably supplying snap rings to fit the snap rings when the whole process ranging from a step of supplying the snap rings to a step of fitting the snap rings is automatically performed.

Claim 1 requires the combination of the above-described oscillating member and a projection-strip guide wall, and thus, the gap of the snap ring is directed forward in the conveying direction during the process in which the extrusion member pushes out a snap ring occupying the lowest position in the magazine and conveys the snap ring along the conveying path to the projection-strip guide wall. Also, when the snap ring reaches the projection-strip guide wall, the projection-strip guide wall reliably enters the gap of the snap ring, and thereby the snap ring can be supplied downstream with the gap being directed forward in the termination area of the conveying path.

JP 2002-346855 (hereinafter “**JP ‘855**”) discloses a device for supplying snap rings that includes: a magazine (M) containing a stack of C-shaped snap rings (S), a conveying base (11) defining a conveying path (13), and an extrusion member (15) for pushing out a lowermost snap ring from the magazine forward in the conveying direction. Further, as shown in Fig. 3, the JP ‘855 device has a vertical projection-strip guide wall (21) having a width that permits the projection-strip guide wall to enter the gap of the snap ring.

However, JP ‘855 does not disclose or suggest an oscillating member that is protractible and retractable with respect to a conveying surface of the conveying path at an area in front of the

magazine in the conveying direction. As shown in Fig. 3, the device of JP '855 does not include any structure that corresponds to the claimed oscillating member, and therefore JP '855 cannot anticipate claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b).

In the rejection of original claim 1, the Examiner takes the position that the conveyance means 10 of JP '855 corresponds to the claimed extrusion member. Then, in the rejection of claim 2, the Examiner states that the plate 15 and the hydraulic cylinder 14 of JP '855 correspond to the claimed oscillating member. However, the plate and the hydraulic cylinder are components of the conveyance means 10, which the Examiner previously identified as corresponding to the claimed extrusion member. Clearly, JP '855 lacks the claimed oscillating member, which is defined as being protractible and retractable with respect to a conveying surface of the conveying path at an area in front of the magazine in the conveying direction. Thus, JP '855 does not disclose or suggest an arrangement in which the gap of the snap ring, which has been pushed out by the extrusion member, is directed by an oscillating member in a conveying direction on the conveying path.

Further, claim 2 recites that the oscillating member has a long guide part having a width that can enter the gap. Also, claim 2 requires an urging member for urging the oscillating member so as to make the guide part protrude from the conveying surface.

This feature causes the oscillating member to enter the gap of the snap ring as it is pushed out of the magazine. Therefore, the snap ring can be transferred along the conveying path with the gap being reliably directed forward in the conveying direction.

As described above, JP '855 does not include an oscillating member, and therefore cannot

meet the limitations of claim 2.

Further, **claim 3** recites that an elongated guide part of the oscillating member has an end part disposed adjacent the projection-strip wall in the conveying direction. Claim 3 also recites that the oscillating member is attached such that the end part is protractible and retractable with respect to the conveying surface of the conveying path in an area adjacent the projection-strip guide wall. Clearly, JP '855 does not meet the limitations of claim 3.

Further, **claim 4** requires a cover member provided on the conveying base in the termination area of the conveying path so as to cover from above the pair of concave parts and the projection-strip guide wall. Claim 4 specifies that the cover member has a pair of guide parts for guiding the snap ring downwardly.

Also, claim 4 specifies that the pair of guide parts is (i) formed so as to protrude downwardly at positions so that the pair of guide parts opposes the pair of concave parts, and (ii) formed so as to define a contact surface that is curved so that a projection amount thereof increases toward the front in the conveying direction.

Accordingly, the cover member of the present invention can prevent dust or foreign material from entering the conveying path. Additionally, even when the cover member is magnetized or even when an oil film or the like adheres to a lower surface of the cover member, the snap ring is guided downwardly by the pair of guide parts of the cover member, and is forcibly separated therefrom. Therefore, the snap ring is prevented from adhering to the lower surface of the cover member. Clearly, JP '855 does not include a cover member, and therefore cannot meet the limitations of claim 4.

Further, **claim 5** recites that each bottom of the pair of concave parts is formed so as to be an inclined surface. Claim 5 further recites that the inclined surface is (i) formed so as to descend toward a front in the conveying direction, and (ii) formed so as to define upwardly-convex curved surface. This feature causes the snap ring to be guided gradually downwardly by the curved contact surface so that the transition of the snap ring, from the horizontal position to a vertical position, can be smoothly performed.

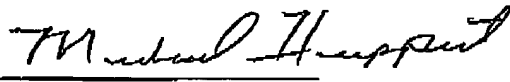
In contrast, the concave parts (22, 23) of JP '855 do not define an inclined surface that is upwardly convex. Thus, JP '855 does not disclose or suggest the concave portions recited in claim 5.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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